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Farmers Pool Fields

Major Part of GDR Farms Now Collectivised

Tractors were ploughing long furrows across old field boundaries this spring on hundreds of new agricultural production cooperatives, or collective farms, formed in the German Democratic Republic in the past few weeks. Figures published in Berlin during March showed that well over half of all farm land was now owned collectively, and four of the fourteen counties which make up Democratic Germany announced that the last small-holders had decided to join the collective farms.

These four counties, Rostock, Neubrandenburg, Frankfurt (Oder) and Potsdam, comprise a major part of the best agricultural land in East Germany, and all lie in the flat northern part of the country. Collectivisation is going on at a slower rate in the southern part of the country, much of which is hilly land where the advantages of big-area mechanised cultivation are not so immediately obvious. But here, too, the cooperatives are growing and more and more villages and districts are also fully collectivised.

By the end of 1959 approximately 40% of the agricultural area of the GDR was being farmed on a collective basis. Early in 1960 the big swing towards collectivisation began in the coastal district of Rostock, and in early March Rostock was able to report that all farmers in the area had pooled their fields. Similar reports came in the next few days from Neubrandenburg, which is also in the northern area once known as Mecklenburg, and from Frankfurt (Oder) and Potsdam, the two counties nearest Berlin.

In an open letter to the collective farmers on March 17th, Deputy Prime Minister Walter Ulbricht congratulated them on their decision and urged that every effort should now be made to get spring sowing completed on schedule.

(For facts on collective farming in the GDR and an eye-witness account of a new collective farm, see page 53.)

Peace Treaty Talks Mooted

The two German states should name immediately delegates to a joint Peace Treaty Delegation which would present plans for a peace treaty with Germany to the Summit Conference in Paris in May, GDR Prime Minister Otto Grotewohl proposed on March 25th.

The proposal was made in a letter to West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, which was read to a press conference in Berlin by Prime Minister Grotewohl half an hour after it had been delivered in Bonn, the West German capital.

The letter urged that the commission should be established immediately, in order to try to find a joint standpoint before the date of the Paris Conference. If agreement could not be reached, then the standpoints of the two German governments would have to be submitted separately to the Summit Conference.

Explaining the purpose of his letter to the press conference, Prime Minister Grotewohl stated that the conclusion of a peace treaty would make it possible for the whole of Germany to be freed of occupation troops and foreign military bases. It would make it possible for the whole German people to return to the comity of nations as an equal partner, and make their weight felt for disarmament and peaceful coexistence.

The conclusion of a peace treaty would also make it much easier for the two German states to reach agreement on steps to be taken towards reunification.

Speaking very earnestly, Otto Grotewohl then stated:

"I should like to declare most solemnly that our conception of a peace treaty with Germany is not connected in any way with endeavours to transfer to West Germany the social system of the German Democratic Republic. Our only concern is to ensure peace for the whole of Germany, and to abolish for all time the possibility that a war of adventure might be launched from German soil."

The GDR Prime Minister recalled that in the past eight years the German Democratic Republic had made more than one hundred different offers as a basis for peaceful reconciliation with West Germany. The new letter to Dr Adenauer was a further proof that the German Democratic Republic was not relaxing its efforts to bring about a peace treaty with Germany.

The Big Four naturally had the right and the duty to make decisions on a peace treaty with Germany, but since this treaty would have to be a negotiated treaty, and not a dictated treaty, then the Germans would have to be represented in the peace treaty negotiations.

(Letter text on next page)

Peace Treaty Plan-TEXT

Here is the text of the letter addressed by GDR Prime Minister Otto Grotewohl to Dr Konrad Adenauer, West German Chancellor, on March 25th:

The question of the preparation of a peace treaty to be concluded with Germany will have an important place on the agenda of the conference of the heads of government of the Four Powers opening in Paris on May 16th. The interests of the German people demand that the governments of the two German states and the governments of the Four Powers finally take steps leading to a peace settlement with Germany.

The conclusion of a peace treaty has great national importance for Germany. It would remove the biggest obstacle which today prevents the peaceful and democratic reunification of Germany. A peace treaty would clear the path for reconciliation between the two German states by way of step-by-step rapprochement and final unification. The German people would be able to develop fully their peace economy, and other nations would have the guarantee that peace would never again be menaced from German soil. The peace treaty would be an effective barrier against a Third World War.

As long ago as September 1958 the Government of the German Democratic Republic took the initiative to speed up the conclusion of a peace treaty, by calling upon the Powers to begin the preparations for a peace treaty with Germany. At the same time the Government of the German Democratic Republic approached the Government of the German Federal Republic with the proposal that a joint German commission should be established to discuss the question of a peace treaty. Unfortunately the government of the Western Powers and of the Federal Republic did not agree to this proposal.

In view of the coming conference of the heads of government, the Government of the German Democratic Republic regards it as urgently necessary that the two German states should jointly support the just demand of the German people for the conclusion of a peace treaty, and that they should present the standpoint of the two German states with regard to the peace treaty to the heads of government of the Four Powers, the most important states of the anti-Hitler coalition and therefore the main partners in the peace treaty.

The Government of the German Democratic Republic suggests to the Government of the German Federal Republic the naming of delegates for a joint German Peace Treaty Delegation, and the granting to this delegation of powers to submit, to the conference of the heads of government in Paris, the viewpoint of the governments of both German states on the question of a peace treaty with Germany.

Proceeding from the fact that the two German governments have hitherto held different views on the necessity of the conclusion of a peace treaty, and on the contents of such a treaty, the Government of the German Democratic Republic believes that the representatives of the two German states in the joint Peace Treaty Delegation should in the first place endeavour to find an agreed standpoint on the question of the peace treaty. In order to begin such an exchange of opinions without delay, the Government of the German Democratic Republic is ready to name immediately its representatives for the joint German Peace Treaty Delegation. Insofar as agreement cannot be reached between the representatives of the two governments, the presentation of the standpoints on the questions still unresolved must be separate.

The Government of the German Democratic Republic expects the Government of the German Federal Republic to agree to the establishment of a joint German Peace Treaty Delegation, and to name its delegates.

The conclusion of a peace treaty would make it possible to devote the full powers of the German people to peaceful ends. This would be a great contribution to the relaxation of tension.

Democratic Germany Thanks Liberators — Recalls Role of German Underground

Democratic Germany is grateful to the allied soldiers who liberated Germany from fascism in World War Two, stated an open letter published by the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party on March 22nd. The letter formed part of the preparations for a worthy celebration of the 15th anniversary of the liberation of Germany from nazism. May 8th, Liberation Day, is celebrated as a public holiday in the German Democratic Republic: in West Germany the anniversary is ignored.

The letter of the Socialist Unity Party stated:

"We thank the Soviet people, who played the major part in smashing fascism: we thank the resistance fighters of all countries, and the soldiers and officers of the armies of the anti-Hitler coalition who prevented the world from becoming a fascist concentration camp.

"On the fifteenth anniversary of the liberation of the German people from the fascist yoke we thank all those who fought for German's freedom; we honour the memory of those who fell, and we call upon everyone to fulfil their heritage."

The open letter recalled that no small number of Germans had fought and died in the struggle against German fascism. "Of 300,000 members of the Communist Party of Germany, 145,000 were thrown into concentration camp or jail, or forced to emigrate, because of their active fight against struggle. More than 30,000 Communist Party officials were executed or died in the concentration camps. 27 communist members of the last pre-Hitler Reichstag laid down their lives."

The letter paid tribute to the social democrats, the middle-class patriots, the pastors, and aristocrats like Count von Stauffenberg, author of the 1944 bomb-plot against Hitler, who had joined in the fight against nazi oppression.

Apart from the resistance groups in Germany, there were the thousands of German anti-fascists who fought in the ranks of the International Brigades in Spain, and later in partisan units in the Soviet Union, France, Poland, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia.

HOW TO SOLVE GERMAN PROBLEM

By Richard Crossman, M. P.

What matters to us today is the fact that: Militarily, Dr. Adenauer's Germany will soon be twice as powerful as any of her Western allies ...

Economically, Dr. Adenauer's Germany is dominating the European Common Market and threatening British trade ...

Politically, Dr. Adenauer himself already exerts at least as much power in Washington as Mr. Macmillan and has announced his intention of sabotaging any compromise about Berlin at the Summit talks which are due in a few weeks' time.

The question we should ask ourselves, therefore, is not whether the Labour Government should have consented 10 years ago to the rearmament of Germany, but how Britain in 1960 should face the dangers created by the re-emergence of a nationalist German State as a world power.

My first suggestion is that we should get the danger into perspective. To talk about Adenauer's Federal Republic as though it were a menace comparable to Hitler's Germany is plain silly.

True enough, the middle ranks of the Civil Service, the judiciary and the academic professions are all stiff with ex-Nazis, and there are a few very active and very dangerous Nazis holding high positions in politics as well as industry.

But what has happened in Bonn since we ended the Allied occupation has not been a Nazi counter-revolution but a nationalist restoration.

Indeed, what Adenauer's Germany resembles is neither the Third Reich nor the spurious democracy of the Weimar Republic, but the Germany of Kaiser Wilhelm II which preceded World War I.

Once again, we see at the bottom of the pyramid the obedient, diligent, unpolitical German masses, concerned with nothing outside their material well-being; and at the top, the old ruling class in power once again, flaunting its wealth and beginning to revive its claim that Germany must have "a place in the sun."

The danger we have to face in the next decade is not a war of revenge, deliberately started by Fascist generals, but a peace settlement stultified through the obstinacy of an aged German Chancellor and the resurgent nationalism of the reactionary social forces that keep him in power.

The present crisis in Anglo-German relations is not due, as the Germans often suggest, either to our fear of competition or to national prejudice, far less a racial dislike of Germans.

Personally, I am strongly pro-German, but I am equally strongly opposed to Dr. Adenauer, because I see that he is the main obstacle which prevents a sensible interim settlement of the German problem.

That is a grave charge to make. Here is my justification:

Many months ago, the East German Communists and their Russian backers put forward their policy for peaceful co-existence. They proposed:

1. That the division of Germany into two sovereign States should be accepted for the time being as a fact, and East Germany given equal diplomatic recognition with West Germany.

Once this is done, all trade barriers between the two countries should be removed.

2. Living peaceably together, the two Germanies should form a loose confederation and slowly grow together until they merge into a neutral united Germany.

To this offer, Adenauer's reply is "No! No! No!" His aim is still expulsion of the Communists from East Germany and the absorption of the territory into the Federal Republic.

That is why he refuses any kind of recognition to the East German Republic and threatens to cut off relations with any nation that does not obey his orders.

Furthermore, so far from relaxing tension, he is still waging full-scale cold war against the Communists.

This war is organised mainly from West Berlin and includes not merely psychological warfare and economic blockade, but active sabotage and subversion throughout Eastern Germany.

So long as there was any chance that the East German people would expel their rulers, there was some justification for acquiescing in Adenauer's policy.

But, now that is is obvious that the East German regime has come to stay, it seems to me our duty to expose to the British people what the Adenauer policy means, and to point out that we can only achieve a settlement at the Summit if we are prepared to say No to the German Chancellor.

At present, Labour's policy proposes the unification of Germany by free elections and the withdrawal of American and Russian forces from this new, united Germany, which (along with Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary) should form a neutral zone in the middle of Europe.

We must face the fact that this plan has been overtaken by events.

In 1960, the only policy which makes sense is one which accepts the partition of Germany and tries to make the two parts live peaceably together.

Of course, it is embarrassing that this is what the Communists have been proposing for years, but we cannot go on dismissing a sensible peace policy simply because it is urged by Communists!

(From the London "Daily Herald", March 22nd 1960)

Witnesses Sought

The Public Prosecutor's Office of the German Democratic Republic has appealed for the cooperation of persons in all parts of the world who can give further testimony on the crimes committed by Professor Theodor Oberlaender, at present Refugee Minister in the West German Cabinet.

Following the refusal of the West German judicial authorities to take action against Oberlaender, who is accused of committing war crimes in the nazi-occupied parts of the Soviet Union in the years 1941–43, the GDR Public Prosecutor General has opened legal proceedings against the West German Minister.

At the beginning of July 1941, Oberlaender was the nazi "political officer" of the Nightingale Battalion, a Ukrainian quisling unit which murdered thousands of Jews, Ukrainians and Poles in the nazi-occupied Ukrainian city of Lvov (Lviv, Lwow, Lemberg). Survivors of the Lvov massacres who may be able to testify as to Oberlaender's part in these crimes are known to be living today in Israel, Canada, Australia, USA and other countries. They are requested to get in touch with the GDR Public Prosecutor General in Berlin at this address:

Oberste Staatanwaltschaft der DDR,
Scharnhorststrasse
Berlin
German Democratic Republic

S. AFRICAN MASSACRES PROTESTED

GDR Pledges Full Support to African People

The massacre in Sharpeville and other towns in the Union of South Africa was sharply condemned in a statement by the Foreign Ministry of the German Democratic Republic on March 25th.

"The Government of the GDR stands with all its sympathy on the side of the persecuted population of the Union of South Africa in their struggle for equal rights," the statement said.

"The Government demands categorically that the racist terror should cease and that equal rights for all peoples of Africa be guaranteed, in accordance with the provisions of the United Nations Charter."

"It is no accident that the West German Government has not uttered a single word in condemnation of the racist policies of the South African Government nor in sympathy with the victims of racist terror. On the contrary, the leaders of the new rebirth of imperialism and neo-colonialism in West Germany never miss an opportunity of guaranteeing the Government of the Union of South Africa their full support. This was especially clear in the statement made a few days ago by West German Foreign Minister von Brentano regretting deeply that the West German Trade Union Federation had called for a boycott of South African imports. And less than a year ago, Dr. Heinrich Luebke, now West German President, said during a visit to the Union of South Africa that "the native problem" was in good hands in the Union of South Africa and the policies of the Union of South Africa could be recommended as an example to other countries ...

"The Government of the GDR speaks not only in the name of the people of the GDR but also for all peace-loving and democratic Germans when it guarantees full sympathy and support to the population of the Union of South Africa in the struggle for democratic human rights and liberation from the colonialist yoke, and also to all other people of Africa who are fighting for national liberation."

* * *

Contributions by trade union members towards the "Solidarity Fund" in April will be used to support the workers of Africa and their trade unions, the executive committee of the Free German Trade Union Federation in the GDR decided. The federation reiterated its support for the struggle for freedom in Africa and its opposition to all kinds of race hatred.

Olympic Victory Repeated

A record crowd of 120,000 Norwegians watched as Helmut Recknagel, Democratic Germany's ace jumper and Squaw Valley winner, nudged out the Norwegian favourite Toralf Engan by a half-point on March 20th to win his second victory at the Holmenkollen Ski-Jump Contests.

The ski fans, despite their disappointed hopes for a Norwegian victory, gave the young tool-maker from the GDR huge ovations, especially after they were informed that he was celebrating his 23rd birthday on that day.

West German ski jumper Max Bolkart won third place and GDR jumper Werner Lesser tied for fourth place with Yggeseth from Norway.

Recknagel was awarded the Holmenkollen Medal after the event. This was the first time that a Central European had ever received this high Norwegian sport decoration.

Among the onlookers at the famous sport event were King Olaf V of Norway and King Gustav VI Adolf of Sweden.

BBC IS BEASTLY — THEN APOLOGISES

The British Broadcasting Corporation publicly apologised to West Germany on March 15th for broadcasting a song criticising proposals to grant Wehrmacht training bases in Britain.

The song, written and sung by Peter Myers and Ronald Cass in the BBC Home Service on March 14th, opened with the words: "I'm Hans, I'm Hermann, we're jolly and we're German". For the benefit of readers who missed this interesting song, here are some of the verses:

Underneath the lamplight, in the Palace Yard,
Soon there'll be a goosestep changing of the guard;
The Corgis will go, but you will see
The Dachshunds on the balcony.

We're shocked we're being maligned in the news,
We could not be more liberal in our views,
There's one thing we cannot stand:
Racial prejudice and Jews ...

The whole thing's one big goodwill mission,
We're visiting each little house
And giving children a big toy balloon
Inscribed with the words "Juden Raus".

Don't let's be beastly to the British
Now our victory is ultimately won ...
We wrote and asked Franco for bases
That dictator is really a shower,
How ungrateful can one man become,
Has he forgotten we put him in power?

We two wouldn't dream of training in Spain,
Those fascist beasts leave us aghast;
We cannot approve of that bomb of de Gaulle's,
To lay waste the Sahara — the prospect appals.

This time we won't miss, ours goes off in St Paul's ...
Oh, our future cannot be surpassed.
We hold out our hand in friendship today,
The past is forgotten, so let's all be gay ...
Fifteen million war dead are shouting hooray ...

As we occupy Britain,
Once shy, but twice bitten,
As we occupy Britain at last.

(Historical footnote: In the years before the Second World War, the nazi ambassador in London repeatedly protested to the British Government about articles in the British press criticising nazi Germany's warlike policy. Even the conciliatory and appeasement-minded governments of Stanley Baldwin and Neville Chamberlain told the nazi ambassador (Herr von Ribbentrop, later hanged as a war criminal) in more or less diplomatic language to go and take a running, jump at himself.)

A NEW LIFE . . .

Background

Agriculture in most of that part of Germany now forming the German Democratic Republic has traditionally been backward. Before 1945 nearly half the land was held by a few thousand big landowners (Junkers); the rest was tilled by smallholders often near the poverty level on their primitive farms.

One of the first actions of the new German authorities in East Germany after the defeat of Hitler in 1945 was a thorough-going land reform. All estates of over 250 acres were confiscated without compensation and parcelled out to more than half a million poor peasants, agricultural labourers and German re-settlers expelled from eastern and south-eastern Europe.

In 1952 the peasants in many localities, who had been working together in marketing cooperatives, mutual-aid teams and the like, began to form collective farms. This movement gradually spread as more and more peasants found that it meant shorter working hours, modern methods and bigger incomes.

The collective farms in Democratic Germany are known by the initials "LPG", which stands for "Landwirtschaftliche Produktionsgenossenschaft" or Agricultural Production Cooperative. There are three different types of LPG:

Type I: The farmers pool only their arable fields. Everything else remains personal property.

Type II: Arable fields, draught animals and machinery are pooled (this form is seldom adopted).

Type III: Fields, meadowland, forest, machines and animals are pooled. The members of such an LPG can retain small orchards and vegetable gardens, a couple of cows and pigs and small animals or poultry.

The other form of socially-owned property in the countryside is the "VEG", which means "Volkseigene Gut" or Nationally-Owned Estate. These are stud farms, seed farms, training centres for future agriculture experts, etc. About 5.8% of the agricultural land is farmed by the VEGs.

The MTS, or Machine and Tractor Stations, which are run by the Government, hire out tractors and other agricultural machinery to both the collective farms and the small-holdings in the surrounding district. In areas where all or most land is being tilled collectively, the tractors, trucks, combines and other equipment are gradually being turned over to the LPG, and the MTS are turning into Repair Workshops.

. . . DOWN ON THE FARM

By Allen Mann

Big things were going on in the country areas of the GDR. Up near the Baltic Sea coast, in the county of Rostock, farmers had flocked to join cooperative farms. Where none existed they formed new ones till, early this year, all the farmers in the county had become members. During March a group of foreign journalists stationed in Berlin visited the Rostock area to see at close range what was happening.

We arrived late one morning at Rakow, a village of 540 people not far from the Baltic port of Stralsund. Every farmer in the village was a member of the local "agricultural production cooperative", abbreviated LPG in German, which means a cooperative or collective farm. But before January 1960 there had been no LPG in Rakow at all. Now, in the village pub, several of the villagers sat down to tell us how this big change had come about.

Before 1945, Rakow had belonged almost completely to a big landed estate, one of the Junker holdings so prevalent here in the Mecklenburg area of Germany. After the war, the land of the estate was taken over and divided up into parcels of 25 acres each. So far as we could find out, the former landowner probably lives today in West Germany. Quite honestly, nobody was very interested in where he was or what he was doing.

Albert Kison, a 38-year-old farmer, told us something about his start here in the early post-war days. "Things were very rough for us at the beginning, back in 1946. Most of the other farmers had at least a horse; we just had a goat and a baby, and my wife didn't know the first thing about farming then."

Land to be Had

Marianne Kison, his wife, now took up the story: "I myself came from the Sudeten area of Czechoslovakia, my husband comes from a family of German colonists which settled in Bessarabia, on the Black Sea, centuries ago. We met in the American Zone of Germany in 1945, where I was employed by a farmer as cook — no pay at all, but in those days I was glad to have a roof over my head. After we got married, my husband's parents wrote from the Russian Zone that land was being distributed here, so we slipped across the zone border. We finally wound up here in Rakow. Things were difficult but we worked hard — about 16 hours a day — and now we have 6 cows, 4 calves and heifers, 2 horses and some sheep, goats and chickens. We have been earning about 18—19,000 marks a year (£1600 — £1700)."

Frau Kison, a dark blonde woman of about 35 — not a beauty, but with a wide, pleasant face and a resolute chin, continued in her vigorous manner. We were not at all surprised to learn later that she is on the new LPG Executive Committee.

"In mid-January this year people started talking more and more about LPGs, but still nobody joined. Then the farmers' organisation arranged a trip to a well-established successful LPG some distance from here. 32 farmers and their wives went along, and the trip made a great impression on me. I saw how they could raise poultry on a large-scale basis and how well they took care of the calves — each one in a stall of its own, each one clean and comfortable, and that means healthy, of course.

But as small-holders, we couldn't afford things like that.

"Then the first people came here to get us to join. They went from house to house, and I had been so impressed that I was one of the very first to sign. That was on January 28th.

"Three other women and I, who were for the LPG, were then invited to go for a week-long course of training. My husband said, 'It can't make you more stupid. Go ahead.' It was in a vacation hotel on the seashore, and although Rakow is only about 15 miles from the coast, I'd never yet had the time and opportunity to take such a trip before and get away from the cattle, goats, sheep and other chores, not to speak of our two children.

"There were 107 women from all over the county there, and we had one class after the other — they had teachers from the university and elsewhere. There was everything from 'The main tasks of women today' to 'care of poultry', and lots of discussion on how to start an LPG. It was not so easy for us farm women to sit still such a long time, it's true, but otherwise it was great — and all free, except for what we spent evenings when we went out and talked over a bottle of wine.

Waiting Period

"That lasted a week. By February 10th in our village there were still only 7 who had signed up. Everyone was waiting for the next man, it seemed; we had all been given our land at about the same time and almost nobody wanted to make a move without the others. But a few of us and the people who had come to help us organise the LPG kept up our efforts to convince the villagers that it was only logical to get together.

"We pointed out that as individual farmers, each working for himself, we had reached the limit of our production, but that butter, eggs and meat were required by the cities in greater and greater quantities. The only way to produce more is to get together and work cooperatively, we said. That would mean saving a great deal of waste effort and we farmers would finally have a bit of free time. It would help the women especially. And as soon as we're able to use the proper machinery in our work, our whole life would take a turn for the better. But all that is not really possible for small-holders with little fields and just a few head of cattle."

"It was just the same as with a horse," Albert Kison interrupted. "When the barn door is repainted he gets frightened and won't go in. He knows that the door should be grey and not such a shiny white. He has to get used to the idea of that new white door first."

Weber Broke Ice

Frau Kison took up the story again. "The man who broke the ice was Weber, the most respected farmer in the village — he's now the chairman of the new LPG. When he signed, almost everyone else came along too, and on February 12th we founded the new LPG, with 68 members. We had a big celebration, the nicest in my life, with flowers for all the new members, and with music and wine. We all toasted the new LPG, and decided that if everyone worked hard at first, things couldn't go wrong — and soon enough, modern machinery would make itself felt more than ever before. And we elected our Executive Committee of nine members."

But there were still about 10 farmers who had not joined. One of them, named Woltmann, was here in the pub with us now, a strong, broadly-built man of about 45, with his quiet little wife sitting beside him. He turned to Frau Kison and said, "Now it's my turn to speak.

"I used to be a milker on a big estate in East Prussia, and I was paid well enough. After the war I got a strip of land here — I started out with only one little calf — and bad luck, for we kept on getting children. But I worked hard too and earned well — now we have 5 cows, a heifer and a calf and good earnings every year. I am still not all sure about this new LPG. As a small-holder I knew what I had, but now I don't yet know what I am going to have in the LPG. The people organising LPGs came to every house here in the village — they wouldn't go away — they argued and argued with us. They had an answer for everything we could say. After I heard that some of the advantages we have had all these years might stop if we didn't join, I reconsidered. I saw that I could not go it alone, so I finally joined up, as one of the last members. But I warn you — things may work if we remain a "Type I" LPG and only put our fields together. But if we change to "Type III" and have to pool most of our livestock as well, I foresee trouble. If I don't have cattle in the stall, I just won't feel myself to be a farmer anymore!"

Last Holdouts

What Herr Woltmann said was an example of difficulties which had cropped up. There were usually a few farmers who couldn't easily be convinced. The method used to win over the last hold-outs was in some cases the following: it was made clear to them that they had become prosperous only because of very generous credits from the government, the low prices they had paid for the plowing or harvesting which the Tractor Stations had done for them, and the high prices paid for a large portion of their products (farmers have a set quota of products which they deliver at fixed guaranteed prices; they can then dispose of their surplus, often as much as 70% of their production, at a substantially higher price). It might be economically impossible to continue all these special advantages if everyone else joined the LPG except for a very few individuals.

Was this undue pressure? Western papers said yes, but their countries had often seen the most brutal methods used to make big farms out of little ones — from the days of the Dust Bowl and "Grapes of Wrath" to the present in West Germany, where many thousands of small-holders are forced out of business every year. The present developments in the GDR were vitally necessary — to produce more and more eggs, beef, milk and

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Berlin W 8, Germany

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Address .....

chicken, and to make life better for the farmer at the same time.

One farmer explained it as follows: "When a calf is being born, it helps both cow and calf if the farmer grabs the little one by the legs when they appear and gives a quick, short pull. Then everything goes on well from there."

As for Woltmann, after he had finally joined the LPG he was elected to the Executive Committee. This turned out to be a good move, for he was now ready to argue about how much maize should be planted by the new cooperative, for example; that meant that he already felt himself a part of the group.

The discussion in the pub showed that the first advantages had already been felt by members of the new LPG. Instead of every farmer having to load manure for his fields himself with a pitchfork, this job was now being done mechanically by a team working from one end of the village to the other and using tractor-drawn wagons instead of horse and cart.

New Careers

Another advantage was for the daughter of the new chairman. She had always wanted to study but had to stay at home to help her parents with the farm work. Now that was not necessary, and she would soon be leaving for a school to train as a veterinary assistant, and if she shows ability, she might go on for further training. All LPG members who take courses of training outside the village are granted part of the cooperative earnings for a period lasting up to six months. For longer courses, they get the regular government stipends awarded students in the GDR.

As for other young people, the LPG means that they can now sit behind a tractor instead of a horse. It means work on the wheat combine, the potato or sugar-beet harvester and other modern machinery and it will mean, as soon as possible, an eight-hour day for most of the year. It is hoped that this will help end the serious desertion of the villages by thousands of young people who have been flocking to the cities in past years because they wanted an 8-hour day instead of the eternal drudgery on the farm. New machinery and all the interesting new problems of large-scale farming and animal husbandry will offer a new life "down on the farm".

A man named Jahn from the nationally-owned Machine and Tractor Station in a nearby village spoke up. "Up till now we had to plow, cultivate and harvest 450 different farms with our machinery in this area. We could never cope with all the work, especially since most of the fields were too small for our big equipment to turn around in. So a lot of the work had to be done with horses.

"But now there are only a few farms left — all of them LPGs — and we can cover the big fields in much less time. That means that we won't be hit so hard by bad weather spells, for we can get everything done quicker. And in the autumn we'll be turning over our machinery to the different LPGs in the area — at first just lending them, and then after a while for good."

It would take some time for the dust to settle in Rakow — for the farmers to get used to the new methods and for all the advantages of scientific, large-scale farming to prove themselves. The next few years will be the crucial period for the new LPG to get on its feet.

A Look at Tomorrow

But with the help of a 25-mile bus trip we were able to skip over those years and see what Rakow will probably be like in the near future. We visited Bartelshagen, a village where the LPG is already eight years old. In 1952, at the very beginning of the movement to form collective farms, five families had pooled their land. The going had been very difficult at first, especially because the weaker and less capable farmers had generally been the first to join, but now the big LPG was strong and prosperous. It combined three small villages like Rakow into one big farm with 400 members and 5400 acres. It was guided by two college graduates in agronomy and would open its own adult training school in the next few days with lectures on specialised problems of agriculture and animal husbandry as well as many topics of a more general nature.

There was also a big, roomy new building surrounded by little toddlers — the village kindergarten, another achievement of the LPG in Bartelshagen. A large cultural centre would soon go up, with club rooms, a theatre for cinema and amateur dramatic circles and library facilities.

A group of fifty farmers and their wives also went by bus each month to the theatre in Rostock, and a new painting club had just been founded — 6 members to begin with and a visiting artist as instructor.

The most interesting feature of the LPG was the area devoted to the animals; one long barn after another was being put up by the LPG's own construction team. We visited a long building with 96 black and white checked cows — spotlessly clean, with the cows all feeding from long troughs which were filled from a tractor-drawn cart driven through the barn. Above the head of each contented cow was a blackboard with her name and biographical details — and of course, how much milk she was giving.

The buildings for hogs were just as clean, just as modern and to me even more impressive, for they did not smell. This may be nothing new in animal husbandry, it is true, but it was a striking contrast to the individual stalls we had seen in Rakow — often dark, usually dirty, sometimes damp and never pleasant-smelling. It was good to think that they might soon belong to the past, even if it took a while for farmers like Herr Woltmann to get accustomed to it.

The 96 cows in the barn at Bartelshagen were attended by only three people. In Rakow, where the LPG had just begun, it was still necessary for dozens of farmers and their wives to spend hours of heavy labour caring for a similar number of cows, and not getting as much milk either.

We visited the machinery sheds, too, and saw the modern equipment now being turned over to the LPG — 10 tractors of various kinds, 2 harvesting combines, 2 potato harvesters, a truck and a wide range of plows, harrows, etc. More would follow.

The comparison allowed only one conclusion — modern cultivation, scientific animal husbandry and a more leisurely, cultivated and pleasanter life were possible as soon as the cooperative farms could get on their feet, learn to work together and use the new methods. The backwardness of the German peasants of old, the fears of being forced off the land by financial pressure as in the past and in today's West Germany, will soon be banished for ever.

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BERLIN NOTEBOOK

By John Peet

In past years GERMAN REPORT often had to devote considerable space to dealing with stories in the western press about the German Democratic Republic — stories which ranged from plain silly to very vicious. Recently, I am glad to say, the number of such stories has fallen off considerably: reports on events in Democratic Germany are still often hostile and twisted, but the degree of distortion is nothing like as high as it was.

Today, however, I feel I must deal with a particularly nutty example of nonsense. The "Glasgow Evening Citizen" of March 11th reported an interview with a Glasgow woman named Mrs Greta Donaldson, who had paid a three day visit to the Leipzig Fair at the beginning of March. Here are some of the hair-raising things which Mrs Donaldson was reported to have said:

"There are no children in Leipzig. All children under 14 have been banned from the Fair, which really means kept out of Leipzig, as the Fair involves the whole city".

A quick calculation shows that at least 100,000 children under the age of 14 must have been deported from Leipzig for the ten-day fair period. Nobody except Mrs Donaldson seems to have noticed this vast movement of population.

"There are few shops in Leipzig. The goods are shoddy, except the porcelain ..."

The centre of Leipzig is one mass of shops: at a guess, there are just as many shops per head of the population in Leipzig as in Glasgow.

"In the evening there was nothing to do. There were no cinemas, no theatres, and only one restaurant-cum-club, which was very difficult to enter unless you knew somebody".

Lost Weekend

Mrs Donaldson must have been visiting some other city in some other country. There are 35 cinemas in Leipzig, an opera house, and four theatres. (Glasgow is almost twice as big as Leipzig: has it got eight theatres?) There are dozens of restaurants, and more dance-halls, cabarets, bars, pubs and what-have-you than in any other city in Democratic Germany. Mrs Donaldson's remark that you could only get into "the only restaurant" if you knew somebody has, however, got a glimmer of truth in it. During the Fair, when something like half-a-million visitors from Germany and abroad pour into the city, restaurant accomodation is, in fact, taxed to the utmost.

But I liked the final sentence of the interview with the doughty Mrs Donaldson best:

"Just now everything was window-dressing, ingeniously arranged to try and give the visitor a good impression."

Some window-dressing! You deport all children from the city, shut most of the shops, fill the shop-windows with shoddy goods, abolish dozens of cinemas and theatres, and spirit away all the restaurants, bars and pubs. Then you invite a discerning visitor like Mrs Greta Donaldson.

They only thing that continues to worry me is this: where can Mrs Donaldson have spent those three days which she believes she spent in Leipzig?

Happy Birthday?

Here is an interesting little sidelight on the psychology of ruling circles in West Germany, that great bastion of western democracy. On March 20th an old Prussian general celebrated his 90th birthday. He received telegrams of congratulation from West German President Heinrich Luebke and Chancellor Adenauer, and most of the top commanders of the West German armed forces attended the official birthday celebration in Bonn.

Admiral Bernhard Rogge, who served Hitler as a cruiser commander and who is today Rear Admiral in command of the NATO area of Schleswig-Holstein officially praised the ancient general as "a model for all members of our armed forces".

Now who was this "model" for today's West German soldiers? His name is Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck, and the fulsome birthday notices in the West German newspapers presented him as the very quintessence of a Prussian soldier: cold showers twice a day, hunting, shooting and fishing, long walks in the rain, and porridge for breakfast. And of course, he had always been an officer and a gentleman.

It all sounds very worthy and old-world until you take a closer look. He first went into action as commander of one unit of the German imperial troops sent in 1900 to suppress the Chinese war of independence, generally known in the West as the "Boxer Rising". Kaiser Wilhelm II, seeing Lettow-Vorbeck and his men off, made a classic speech naming them "modern Huns", and calling upon them to make every Chinese shiver at the name of Germany.

Fresh from the massacres in China, Lettow-Vorbeck was sent to German South-West Africa, where he played a leading part in the virtual extermination of the Hereros in 1904 and subsequent years. This was one of the largest scale massacres in the whole history of European colonisation in Africa.

More Glory

In the First World War he commanded German troops in German East Africa (now Tanganyika), and returned to Germany in time to play a prominent part in the counter-revolutionary activity of the militarists in 1919—1920. On July 1st 1919, for instance, he marched into Hamburg at the head of his reactionary troops, and slaughtered dozens of socialists and communists; during the fascist Kapp putsch in March 1920 he rose against the legal government and arrested the provincial government of Mecklenburg. This was too much even for the very complaisant Social-Democratic Government of the Weimar Republic, and he was sacked from his army command.

There would be no point in disinterring the ancient and gory history of this old man if it had not been for the very official recognition given to him on his 90th birthday. But as said at the beginnning of these notes, the whole incident throws an interesting light on the mental processes of people who can recommend a person like Lettow-Vorbeck as a model for the West German armed forces of today.

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